

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD
MINUTES

Date: August 17, 2021
Time: 10:00am
Place: Via Zoom Meeting
Egremont

Present in-person were Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Board member Mary Brazie.

Others participating via zoom: Mary McGurn,, Juliette Haas, and for parts of the meeting Chuck Ogden, Pat Konecky, Peg McDonough, Emily Eyre and Bruce Kafenbaum.

It was announced that the meeting is video and audio recorded.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the August 4 meeting were accepted with minor edits.

SCHEDULED ISSUES:

The Board discussed the position of Administrator for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding with Peg McDonough who agreed to take on the position. The Town has received its County allocation so currently has \$180,091 in hand. Peg McDonough will meet with Mary Brazie in the near future to go over the current list of proposed expenditures and a time line.

NEW BUSINESS:

Pat Konecky, co-chair of the Green Committee, presented the Committee's mission statement (attached) to the Board for its approval. Board members expressed their support for the Committee and its work and agreed that the board only needed to be consulted when an issue would have a financial impact on the town or its residents. The Board asked if Committee members could volunteer some time at the Transfer Station for recycling education.

The Board accepted the resignation of Joan Goodkind from the Housing Committee. The Board will set up a meeting with the remaining three members of the Committee before September 1 to talk about the Committee's mission, the relationship between S&K Design and the possibility of hiring a project manager with ARPA funds. The board discussed the project management position with Bruce Kafenbaum who is interested in serving in that role. At the Board's next regular meeting it will consider letters of interest from two resident wishing to be on the Housing Committee.

The Board agreed, after being made aware of multiple complaints from one resident, to ask the Zoning Board of Appeals to meet with the proprietors of The Barn at the Egremont Village Inn to review the outdoor music and the conditions on the special permit. The Special Permit is vague as to specifics about decibels and light acoustics so enforcement by the Building Inspector and Board of Health has not been possible.

Both the Highway and Police Union contracts expire June 30, 2022. The Board will give notice that it wishes to begin negotiations for a new contract in October of 2021. The Board agreed that the negotiation team will be Selectboard Chairman George McGurn and Personnel Director Cara Becker.

All proposals will be forwarded to the Selectboard for review and to the Human Resources Committee for a recommendation prior to the Selectboard's vote to approve or not. The Town does not know who the current Union Representative is.

The Board accepted the resignation of Chet Delaney from the Bylaw Committee. The Committee, which currently has 5 members, would like to add members and will draft a profile to use for seeking new members.

The Board accepted the resignations of Robin Goldberg, Francine Groener, and Susan Turner from the Cultural Council. The Council, which is a combined Alford and Egremont council, allocates the town's allotment of funding from the Mass Cultural Council to arts, educational and youth organizations. These three members had taken on the bulk of the work in administering these funds. The Board is not clear about who will take on that role and if new members are needed. A meeting with the remaining membership may be held in the near future to discuss these issues.

The Board accepted the resignation of Robin Goldberg as an elected Assessor. The two remaining members of the Board of Assessors have given notice of the vacancy to the Board. The Town must post the vacancy for one week before the two Board make a joint appointment to fill the vacancy until the next election.

The Department of Revenue (DOR) has certified the Town's Free Cash at \$397,196 and, very surprisingly, the Water Enterprise Fund Free Cash at \$93,318. The Water Department has historically run a deficit so it is unclear how they have suddenly obtained a healthy free cash figure. The Board decided to request a meeting with the Water Commissioners to discuss several issues such as budgeting, infrastructure needs, the Commissioners mission and goals, and the possibility of applying for funds to get internet to the Plant.

OLD BUSINESS:

Juliette Haas clarified again that Egremont is a part of the Berkshire Health Alliance and gets its public health nursing services through that organization rather than Tri-Town Health or the Southern Berkshire Public Health Nurse Collaborative. The Berkshire Health Alliance nurse will begin to attend the SAGE Triad meetings in September.

The Board voted unanimously to release the Town's right of first refusal on the Burdsall 50 acre tract of land on Phillips Road, which is being sold and two acres being removed from the Chapter 61 Forestry Program. The remaining 48 acres will remain in the Chapter 61 program. If any further acreage is removed for development by other than family members the Town will have the opportunity again to consider its right of first refusal.

Juliette Haas reported that though there has been no response to her question to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) about whether the Town can opt back into the Department of Public Health (DPH) mosquito control program it looks like the Town won't have the option to opt back in until next year. It was clarified that the program is only active if the DPH issues a health advisory which would happen if mosquitoes were testing positive for such diseases as West Nile Virus or Eastern Equine Encephalitis. That has not happened yet this year even with the increased presence of mosquitoes.

GRANTS:

As noted earlier in the meeting a path forward has been determined in regard to the administration of the Town's ARPA funding.

Juliette Haas reported that the air sensor program through DEP only covers the cost of the sensors, not installation, electrical outlets or Wi-fi. A minimum of 5 sensors must be obtained to be placed in five different locations. Locations proposed are Town Hall, French Park, April Hill, the Library or the South Fire Station and, as internet is being proposed in the foreseeable future, the Water Plant. There may be costs to install outdoor electrical outlets at a cost of about \$500 each. The data would be live and accessible by anyone. The application deadline is October 1, 2021.

Mary McGurn reported that the Planning Board is discussing applying for a Best Practices Community Compact grant to support initiatives that recognize the town's exceptional environment. The Open Space and Recreation Plan, which was written in 2001 and has expired, needs to be updated.

Mary McGurn will share with Mary Brazie and Peg McDonough a power point presentation and recording of a webinar she attended regarding the ARPA funds.

COVID-19:

The Commonwealth is not updating its guidance at this time. The Federal Government is recommending masking indoors by all and Moderna and Pfizer booster shots at least 8 months from the last shot for health and front line workers at this time, and is considering recommending booster shots for all. The Board made no changes to its guidelines.

FOLLOW UPS/UPDATES:

Tom Currier, MassDOT, has reported that the review of the 100% design for the Route 23/41 reconstruction project is nearing completion with just little details still to be finalized by James Barnack at Jacobs Engineering. The project planning is ahead of schedule. The project will go out to bid in June of 2022. Both the environmental permitting and the right of way process are moving along. Mr. Currier will be asked if there is to be a public hearing requirement before the design is finalized and will be asked to confirm when construction will start.

The prior week there was a full day outage of the MassBroadband Institutes (MBI) fiber line, which meant that FiberConnect was also down for the whole day. Of concern is the fact the MBI does not have a redundancy or a plan for redundancy. The Board will send a letter asking MBI to consider some means of redundancy so that future outages can be short lived.

SELECTMEN'S ITEMS:

The Board will meet on August 31, 2021 at 10am.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15pm.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

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The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.